

COMMENT

More of the Same

A REPORT TITLED 'THE ADIVASIS of Chhattisgarh' by the Asian Centre says : "Naxalites took over the tasks meant to be done by the State and provided protection to the Adivasis against exploitation by the corrupt officials, police, forest department officials, timber mafia, moneylenders etc." This fact has been recognised, albeit meekly, by the Government. In March 2006, Home Minister Shivraj Patil tabled in Parliament a Status Paper on the problem of Left-wing Extremism in India which said, "The focus areas should be to distribute land to the landless poor as part of the speedy implementation of the land reforms, ensure development of physical infrastructure like roads, communication, power etc. and provide employment opportunities to the youth in these areas... Naxal groups have been raising mainly land and livelihood related issues. If land reforms are taken up on priority and the landless and the poor in the Naxal areas are allotted surplus land, this would go a long way in tackling the developmental aspects of the Naxal problem. In the same tone Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said while addressing the Chief Ministers of Naxal-affected states in September 2006: "It is in the most neglected areas of the country that Left wing extremism thrives today."

It was expected then that the Government would first try to solve this problem. Alas! That is not to be. The Central and State Governments are focused more on repression of the people by military action. While addressing the Chief Ministers, the Prime Minister said, "Capacity-building at the State level is most crucial, and if there are any financial constraints, the Centre would be willing to provide necessary assistance. Our understanding, however, is that the States are not doing enough even regarding the filling up of existing vacancies in the Police and other law and order agencies, or improving the quality of the State Special Branches, or toning up the law and order administration." There is no mention of removing the corruption among the government officials. Rather, the Prime Minister seeks to give more police power to the very officers who are the problem. Prime Minister, Home Minister and Chief Minister-all are focused on a military solution of the problem and none is giving attention except lip service to the main problem of corruption of Government officers, land reforms and employment generation. This will only lead to more bloodshed. □□□